

Policies, Regulations and Standards



7. POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND STANDARDS

I. Sidewalk Cleanliness

A. Litter



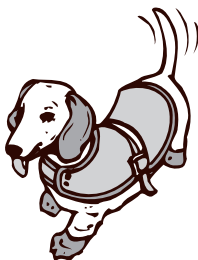
The City Municipal Code bans littering (8.24.170, 180, 190, 200). However, littering is widespread.

According to the code, every owner or occupant of private property is required to maintain his property free of litter and to prevent litter from escaping from his property. Every owner or occupant of private property bordering on a sidewalk is required to keep the sidewalk and the adjoining gutter to the center of the street free of litter.

Actions:

- Publicize responsibilities of people using the sidewalks and of building owners and occupants to keep sidewalks clean. Emphasize quality-of-life benefits of clean sidewalks.
- Trash cans need to be in place near major sources of litter, e.g., outside convenience stores.

B. Dogs

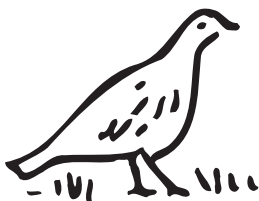


The Cambridge Municipal Code (6.04.060) states:

It shall be the duty of each person who owns, possesses or controls a dog to remove and dispose of any feces left by his dog on any sidewalk, gutter, street or other public area, or on any private property neither owned nor occupied by such person. No such person shall appear with a dog on any sidewalk, gutter, street or other public area, or on any private property neither owned nor occupied by such person without the means of removal of any feces left by such dogs.

The Cambridge Animal Commission has three full-time Animal Control Officers, but it is difficult for them to enforce the ordinance because they can rarely catch dogs in the act. Instead they rely primarily on public education, including written materials sent to owners when they license their dogs.

C. Pigeons



Pigeon excrement on sidewalks can be a problem in some areas. There is no law against feeding pigeons, and as long as they are fed and have shelter they are unlikely to stop congregating in places like Central Square.

Action:

- Public education and social pressure are the best ways to eliminate litter and excrement. Undertake a public relations campaign to remind people of the law and to persuade them that dirtying our sidewalks diminishes the quality of everyone's life.

II. Sidewalk Maintenance

A. Vegetation



Sidewalks should be kept free of impediments such as branches and roots that can impede pedestrians. Residents are expected to consider this when planting trees or bushes and to maintain plantings so they do not interfere with passage on the sidewalk. Inspectional Services is the city department that responds to complaints about botanical obstructions from private property.

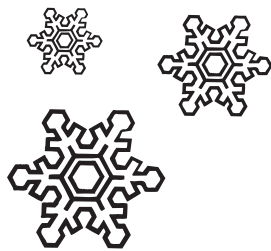


Botanical obstructions.

At the same time, Cambridge is full of old trees that intrude on sidewalk space but add greatly to the quality of life. Recognition of the need for clear passage for pedestrians and the need to accommodate these trees and other important vegetation should be the guiding principles. Some situations may require ingenuity to resolve.

Action:

- Develop planting guidelines for residents and businesses and increase public education about the importance of keeping sidewalks clear.



B. Snow and Ice

By law (City Ordinance 12.16.110), the owner or occupant of property that borders a sidewalk must clear it within twelve hours after snow ceases to fall in the daytime and before 1:00 PM the day after a snowfall during the evening. Building owners and occupants must remove all ice or cover it with salt, sand, or another suitable substance within six hours after the sidewalk becomes icy. For people with corner property, responsibility for shoveling or sanding includes clearing the sidewalk to its intersections with the street. Property owners are also responsible for clearing paths from the sidewalk to the street at bus stops unless other agreements exist.



Uncleared snow is a serious problem for pedestrians.

Currently, compliance is spotty. Except in business districts, it is rare to find a whole block in which the sidewalk has been shoveled the entire length. One short unshoveled stretch can force pedestrians to walk an entire block in the street if they can't climb over snow banks or negotiate icy surfaces. Some homeowners sand or shovel their sidewalks but neglect the portion of sidewalk that crosses their driveway, leaving stretches of sloped, icy sidewalk for pedestrians to navigate. Some people only shovel narrow passageways, leaving insufficient room for baby strollers or wheelchairs or for two people to pass in opposite directions and creating icy conditions when the snow beside the path melts, runs into the cleared area, and freezes.

Persuasion and creation of a public expectation that people will keep sidewalks clear is the first and most important way to deal with uncleared sidewalks. The Department of Public Works has used a variety of means to publicize snow removal regulations and has instituted a 24-hour sidewalk snow removal hot line. People are encouraged to call the hot line and report uncleared sidewalks. Parking Control Officers also do enforcement. The fine for failure to clear a sidewalk is \$25.

The City is responsible for many stretches of sidewalk; some, for example around parks, are long. The first priority for clearing these sidewalks is around public buildings, including schools, but it is important that all sidewalks that the City is responsible for are cleared in a timely manner.

Action:

- Develop additional public education and systematic enforcement to increase awareness and compliance.



C. Construction Sites

Pedestrian safety will be considered equally with vehicular safety at all construction sites in conformance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. A safe pedestrian walkway will be maintained and signed through all construction areas on City projects. The Department of Public Works will also work with utilities in the city to bring them into compliance with pedestrian safety requirements.

III. MDC Sidewalks

The MDC fails to clear snow and ice off the sidewalks on some of its bridges, including the bridge on Alewife Brook Parkway and bridges over the Charles River, creating a safety hazard for pedestrians. Most of the bridges have heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The bridges over the Charles are the only pedestrian connectors between Cambridge and Boston. When crossing bridges, pedestrians should not be forced to choose between walking in the road and navigating snow-covered or icy sidewalks. Uncleared snow along Fresh Pond Parkway and Alewife Brook Parkway is also a problem.

It is important that Cambridge, its abutting communities, and the MDC work together to develop solutions to the problem of uncleared sidewalks on bridges and MDC roads.



